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AUTHOR Lin, Hsiang-Pao; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Specific tools and techniques to help students of English as a Second Language overcome pronunciation problems are presented. The selection of problems addressed is based on the frequency and seriousness of errors that many native Chinese-speaking learners produce. Ways to resolve various problems (e.g., missing final consonants, misplaced stress in sentences, misused intonation patterns) are discussed in three ares of pronunciation: sounds; stress and rhythm; and intonation. Individual and class activities for correction of these errors, designed to meet students' different learning styles (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic), are described. Contains 15 references. (Author/MSE)

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Teaching Pronunciation in the Learner-Centered Classroom

Hsiang-Pao Lin, Chuen-Yn Fan, and Chi-Fen Chen
林香寶　　范春鎂　　陳其芬

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This paper will present specific tools and techniques to help students overcome problems with English pronunciation. The selection of problems is based on both the frequency and seriousness of errors which many Chinese students may produce. Ways to resolve the various problems, such as missing final consonants, misplaced stress in sentences, and misused intonation patterns, will be discussed in the three areas of pronunciation: sounds, stress & rhythm, and intonation. Activities related to the correction of these errors are designed to meet students' different learning styles, namely auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning. In this way, the goal of the "learner-centered" classroom is hoped to be pragmatically achieved.

1. Introduction

How important is pronunciation instruction and how much time should be allotted for it in such a crowded curriculum where general English is taught , for instance, 3 hours per week as at most junior colleges? Some teachers might argue that pronunciation is not important at all for very few of the tests require students to show their speaking ability. Others, however, find that they do not know how to teach pronunciation, even if they want to teach it . It is because of these conventional notions about pronunciation that the teaching of it has, for too long, been neglected in many ESL/EFL curriculums all over the world.

Recently as English teaching has moved to language functions, and communicative competencies, a new urgency for the teaching of pronunciation has arisen (Celce-Murcia, 1987; Morley, 1994; Gilbert, 1994). In Taiwan, however, we found that pronunciation had not yet received similar attention. According to our teaching experience, a great number of our students have many difficulties in pronunciation. When speaking English, with very little or poorly trained pronunciation skills, they have problems either making themselves understood or understanding others.

This paper will attempt to address the common and serious pronunciation errors that Chinese students produce. Activities related to the correction of these errors are designed to meet students' different learning styles, namely auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning. As for the paper's title, the "learner-centered" classroom, we take the term from a broader perspective, meaning that it is a class where students can feel, experience, and monitor their own learning of pronunciation. The paper will cover the three areas of pronunciation: sounds, stress & rhythm, and intonation with the expectation that it will provide the audience with comprehensive insight into ways of teaching pronunciation. The presentation is by no means comprehensive; rather it is an opportunity for sharing what we know about new perspectives in pronunciation instruction. The workshop which this paper is based on was presented at the 12th Annual R.O.C. TEFL Conference at Tunghai University on May, 20, 1994.

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2. Sounds

Teaching sounds involves several steps: first, identify your students' problem areas; second, find a meaningful context for the problem sounds, and then develop communicative or relevant tasks that incorporate the sound; third, develop at least three or four exercises so that students can keep practicing target sounds in new contexts. (Celce-Murcia, 1987). For the sounds part, we intend to offer teachers some remedial teaching techniques for sounds which they can apply in regular English classes to help students overcome problematic sounds.

Vowel length and final consonants are commonly found difficult for most Chinese students to master in English classes. What teachers confront is that no effective technique has been found to help students to pronounce some problematic vowel contrast such as / i / and / ɪ /; / e / and / ɛ / correctly in sentences, in dialogues or even in reading passages. Traditionally, teachers will model the sounds and then students repeat them or teachers show a facial diagram which allocates various sounds positions in the mouth to enhance correct pronunciation. In order to provide teachers with more effective and interesting teaching techniques, the first part of this paper will present some new teaching tools and activities to solve the problems mentioned above.

In the second part of the section on sounds, we will address the problem of dropping final consonants while students are speaking. In Chinese, there is no CVC structure (consonant + vowel + consonant); consonants would never appear at the end of the word. This is quite different from English. Influenced by Chinese, students omit final consonants while speaking and this result in semantic misunderstanding with each other. The activities adopted tend to alert students to final consonants and regulate their English language habits in putting final consonants on in speech.

2.1 Vowel Length

(1)Rubber bands. Students like to have the chance to experience how sounds can be produced through operating a rubber band. For example, using a rubber band in / i / sound, students have to pull both sides of the rubber band to the end to feel the strength and tense of / i /. On the other hand, while practicing / ɪ / , students just have to pull both sides of rubber bands slightly apart, as shown below.

(Adopted from the illustrations from Gilbert, 1993, *Clear Speech*, 2nd. ed., p. 54)

By doing this, students can clearly distinguish the length of the two vowels and experience the real difference between both sounds. Other vowel sounds can also be demonstrated by rubber bands in the same way.

One important aspect that teachers have to inform students about vowels is that if the vowel sound follows a voiced consonant then the vowel sound will be pronounced a little bit longer than when followed by a voiceless consonant. For example:

Has he used this bet ? Has he used this bed ?

Students may hear two different vowel lengths of "bet" and "bed". The "e" sound of "bed" is pronounced a little bit longer than the one of "bet." In speech, "bet" and "bed" can not be distinguished clearly by hearing the final consonants, so the length of the vowel can be an important clue to understanding the real communicative meaning of the speaker. Using rubber bands can help students to build up their listening comprehension ability and clarify the slightly different vowel length.

If the final sound is voiced, the vowel before it is long. Pull the rubber band at both sides to the end. If the final sound is unvoiced, then the vowel before it is short. Pull the rubber band slightly toward both sides.

Examples: rise rice

(Gilbert, 1993, p.45)

Practice the rubber band with different words within the same vowel but followed by voice and voiceless consonants, such as:

back	bet	cap	plants	cart	sink	ice	bucks
bag	bed	cab	plans	card	sing	eyes	bugs

(Dauer, 1993)

Then, do some minimal pairs to practice these similar word sounds in sentences to reinforce the pronunciation. One student is speaking the sentence and the other is operating the rubber band according to what he/she heard from the partner. For example:

a. Please take this back.	Please take this bag.
b. Has he used this bet?	Has he used this bed?
c. I need a cap.	I need a cab.
d. Where are your plants?	Where are your plans?
e. Give him a cart.	Give him a card.
f. She is going to sink.	She is going to sing.
g. I wish I had blue ice.	I wish I had blue eyes.
h. I found ten bucks.	I found ten bugs.

(Dauer, 1993)

(2) Mirrors. In addition to rubber bands, mirrors are a strong self-correction tool for students to modify or imitate sounds. Teachers can ask students to take out mirrors to do peer correction or self-correction while approaching some problematic sounds.

(3) Rhymes. To avoid boring students with continuous practicing and drills, use rhymes with a regular beat and the same vowel sound. This will lead students to master the target sound unconsciously. For example, we take /e / sound into rhymes. Ask students to snap their fingers, clap, or tap on the desks to keep the beat and read aloud the rhyme:

Pretty birds don't fly away
Stay with me all the day
You can sing while I play
So, pretty birds don't fly away
(Tay, 1986, p.28)

(4) Mother tongue. This is an added bonus if students find some way to apply their mother tongue to some English sounds. For example: / e / sound can be applied to Chinese as "欸" in an expressive situation. Examples can be found successfully in class or in students' notebooks.

(5) Role play. A brief role play puts students into a realistic and communicative situation and will allow the sounds to be spoken more naturally and necessarily. We have used a short dialogue which happened in a railroad station between Mr. Gray and the conductor adopted from *Pronunciation Pairs* (Baker & Goldstein, 1990) to let students practice the target sound / e /. One student acts as Mr. Gray who is complaining about the delay of the train, and the other student is the conductor who is trying to understand what's going on with Mr. Gray.

Mr. Gray:	Hey, the train's late! I've been waiting here for ages.
Conductor:	Which train are you waiting for?
Mr. Gray:	The 8:18 to Taipei.
Conductor:	The 8:18? I'm afraid you've made a mistake, sir.
Mr. Gray:	A mistake? but I take this train every day.
Conductor:	Oh, no sir. The train leaves at 8:08.
Mr. Gray:	At 8:08?
Conductor:	That's right. They changed the time at the end of April. Today's the eighth of May.
Mr. Gray:	Changed it? I guess they changed it while I was away on vacation. Hm! So the train isn't late. I'm late.

(p. 14)

(6) Tongue twisters. Tongue twisters are also an interesting way to practice and contrast similar sounds and have fun at the same time. But there is a huge challenge for the teacher and students to do it well. Teachers should tell students at first not to feel upset at making mistakes because even for native speakers, it is difficult. Examples for practicing / e / , / ɛ / and /æ / are below:

Henry, age eight, etched the letter h on the edge of the desk.
It made me laugh to see a calf go down the path a mile and a half to take a bath.

2.2 Final Consonants

(1) Song lyrics. Teachers can ask students to read some popular song lyrics aloud to practice final consonants. In our classes, students omit final consonants often or pronounce them too lightly to be heard. For example, they pronounce student as "studen". Therefore, we ask them to read the marked song lyrics of "Silent Night" in which the final consonants in each sentence have been underlined, and then to listen to the song to notice how the singer produced final consonants.

Silent night, holy night. All is calm. All is bright.
Round young virgin, mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.....

(2) Numbers. Besides song lyrics, numbers can be a good aid in helping students put final consonants on. For example, teachers can set up some particular numbers to have students practice final consonants.

A: What is your telephone number?
B: 215-8186.

3. Stress and Rhythm

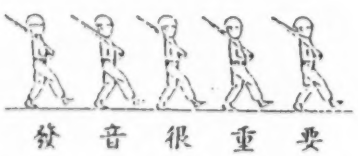
Why is it necessary to teach stress and rhythm? Every language in the world has a characteristic speech rhythm. English tends to be a stress-timed language with rhythmic patterns based on a fairly regular recurrence of stressed syllables (Browne & Huckin, 1987). However, Chinese tends to give equal weight to each syllable, making the rhythmic patterns appear to be more syllable-timed. In Taiwan, many students often use the Chinese rhythmic pattern when speaking English; as a result, even though they can pronounce each English sound correctly, their speech doesn't sound like English.

Their problems with the word rhythm of English are that they often misplace the stress and give each syllable, whether it is stressed or unstressed, the same length; thus, the vowels in the unstressed syllables are not reduced. As for their problems with the sentence rhythm of English, one is that they put stress on too many words, for they don't know what kinds of words need to be emphasized; the other is that they tend to separate words during speech without linking them together. In order to help Chinese students speak English naturally, we English teachers should pay more attention to teaching the rhythm of English. Two aspects of English rhythm, stress and linking, and some teaching tools and techniques related to these two are now discussed.

3.1 Stress

It is important for our students to know the different rhythmic patterns of Chinese and English. The teacher can show them a visual contrast between the two languages to indicate that Chinese is syllable-timed while English is stress-timed.

A. Syllable-Timed Rhythm



B. Stress-Timed Rhythm

(Adapted from the illustrations from Prator & Robinett, 1985, *Manual of American English Pronunciation.* 4th ed.)

In the above illustrations, the Chinese rhythm is composed of soldiers (each soldier represents a syllable), which implies that Chinese has the same length and strength in all syllables; however, the English rhythm is composed of adults (stressed syllables) and children (unstressed syllables), which implies that English has different syllable length and strength.

After having built the concept of the different rhythmic patterns of Chinese and English, students need to practice both word stress and sentence stress in English. Following are some teaching techniques and activities.

3.1.1 Word Stress

(1) Visual effects. Emphasize the stressed syllable by using visual effects: thicken, capitalize, underline, circle, or color the stressed syllable. In addition, the teacher can put a dot for unstressed syllables and a line for the stressed one under the word to indicate that the stressed one needs to be lengthened; or he can put a small dot for unstressed syllables and a big dot for the stressed one under the word to indicate that the stressed one has a stronger beat. Using visual effects can help students notice the place of stress in each word and avoid misusing word stress.

Examples: **today** toDAY today today today today
• ● • —

(2) Rubber bands. Pull a wide rubber band between the two thumbs while saying a word. Stretch it out during the stressed syllable but leave it short during other syllables. It provides a visual image of the variable length of the syllables as well as a kinesthetic tool that mimics the actual effort involved in lengthening a stressed syllable (Gilbert, 1994). The teaching point is to help students avoid pronouncing each syllable at the same length.

(3) Tapping, clapping, or playing simple rhythm instruments. Give a strong beat to the stressed syllable and weak beats to the others by clapping, tapping on the desk, or playing simple rhythm instruments like tambourines or toy hammers. It helps students to be aware that unstressed syllables have weak beats and so their vowels need to be reduced.

(4) Stress matching game. Have students work in groups. One member in the group taps or claps the rhythm of a word from the vocabulary list, and the others have to find out which word has the same rhythm as they hear.

Examples:

artist	manager	secretary	musician
● •	● • •	● • • •	• ● •
politician	cashier	photographer	
• • ● •	• ●	• ● • •	

You hear : ● • • So you choose manager.

(5) Stress and Meaning. Have students work in pairs. Student 1 says sentence (a) or (b). Notice that the stress in (a) and (b) is put in different places. Student 2 has to identify a stressed syllable and make an intelligent guess and then choose an appropriate answer. This activity helps students to understand the relationship between stress and

meaning.

1.	(a) Is it elementary?	No, it's advanced.
	(b) Is it a lemon tree?	No, an orange tree.
2.	(a) What's for rain?	An umbrella.
	(b) What's foreign?	Another language.
3.	(a) Is that Europe?	No, it's China.
	(b) Is that your rope?	No, it's hers.

(Gilbert, 1993, p.69)

3.1.2 Sentence Stress

(1) Finding content words. First, introduce the basic emphasis pattern of English to students to let them know that content words are usually emphasized.

The basic emphasis pattern of English :

Content Words (emphasized)	*nouns* (cat)	*main verbs* (runs)	*adverbs* (quickly)	*adjectives* (happy)
	question words (who, what, where, when, why, how)			
Structure Words (de-emphasized)	*pronouns* (he, she)	*prepositions* (of, to, at)	*articles* (a, an, the)	*"to be" verbs* (is, was)
	conjunctions (and, but)	*auxiliary verbs* (can, have, do, will)		

(Gilbert, 1993, p.72)

Then, have students circle or underline content words in a sentence and give these words extra emphasis when speaking the sentence. At the same time, students can tap, clap, or play simple rhythm instruments to produce strong and weak beats in the sentence.

Example: He wants to be an actor, and he wants to live in Hollywood.

(2) Rhymes. Apply the rhythm of nursery rhymes to the rhythm of ordinary sentences. The reason for this is that students can easily learn nursery rhymes and catch their rhythm without too much effort. Practicing this way helps them to maintain the rhythm patterns in sentences unconsciously and naturally.

• • •	• • •
HICKory DICKory DOCK	The MOUSE ran UP the CLOCK
Do it according to plan.	I'd like to cash a check.
Give me a burger with cheese.	He'd rather take the bus.
Who is the man I should see?	I'll have her call you back.

(Grant, 1993)

(3) Jazz chants. A Jazz chant is a fragment of authentic language presented with special attention to its inherent natural rhythm (Graham, 1992). It has a very clear and strong one-two-three-four beat, so it is easy for students to practice the sentence rhythm through Jazz chants. To establish the tempo, students can count out the rhythm by clapping, finger snapping, or tapping on the desk.

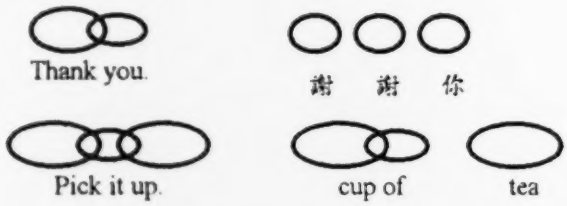
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
Chicken, chicken soup. Rice and beans, rice and beans.
1 2 3 4
I'd like a bowl of soup. Chicken soup.
1 2 3 4
I'd like a large bowl of chicken soup.
(Graham, 1986, p.45)

3.2 Linking

One of the essential characteristics of spoken English is that the words in a thought group are linked together (Gilbert, 1993). Mortimer (1977) also talked about the importance of linking: to pronounce English fluently, it is necessary to link words together as a native speaker of English normally does. Chinese students often fail to do this because they pronounce one word at a time in English just as they do when speaking Chinese. Therefore, linking needs to be taught in order to help students to speak English more fluently as well as to improve their comprehension of English native speakers' normal speech. Following are some teaching techniques.

(1) Chain pictures. Use chains to give a visual image of spoken English, but use separate circles to represent spoken Chinese. It helps students to identify the different speech pattern between spoken English and spoken Chinese.

Examples:



(2) Magnets. Gilbert (1994) mentioned that the pull of magnets can be a physical metaphor to emphasize the attraction between succeeding words, especially if the following word begins with a vowel. She suggested the use of magnets, pieces of iron, and blocks of wood to make teaching aids. However, we modified this; we used some empty audio-tape cases and magnets to produce this effect. Flash cards (e.g., pick, it, me) were put in different tape cases and the magnets were glued onto the two ends of each tape case. Make sure that the two words can be attracted only when the first word's final letter is a consonant and the second word's first letter is a vowel (e.g., pick →← it); otherwise, the two words are repulsed (e.g., pick ←→ me). It helps students remember to link words through this physical image.

Examples:

(3) Curved lines. Use the curved line "◡" between the last and first letters to indicate they need to be linked together. It provides a visual image to remind students of linking words.

Examples: Hold on. Pick it up. I need a cup of tea.

(4) Chants, poems, or song lyrics. Practice linking through reading chants, poems, or song lyrics. Students need to know that English words are linked together during speech. For example, students can read aloud the song lyrics of "Perhaps Love" to practice linking.

Example: Perhaps love is like the ocean, full of conflict, full of pain.
Like a fire when it's cold outside, thunder when it rains.

4. Intonation

In addition to Stress & Rhythm, Intonation, or Melody, or change in pitch, is another significant feature in English. The purpose of intonation, according to Gilbert (1994), is "helping the listener to follow." It is a navigation guide for the listener. She goes on to note that "L2 learners have difficulty hearing intonation"(p.43). Indeed, most of our students, when listening to English, pay more attention to sounds, vocabulary, and grammar. Seldom do they attend to pitch changes. Therefore, when it comes to speaking, they tend to pronounce each word as clearly as possible. It is no surprise to find that many students speak English simply by applying the rhythmic structure of Chinese. The result is that they sound monotonous. That is, their voice is rather flat with little or no change in pitch. The two major problems: (1) misused intonation patterns; and (2) lack of sentence focus, and emotions appropriate to the situation, along with some teaching activities are now discussed.

4.1 Intonation Patterns

One way to make students become aware of their problems in Intonation Patterns is to have them listen to contrasting recordings. The tape can be designed in such a way that students have a chance to hear their own voices and the native speakers'. The conversation should be deliberately chosen with various intonation patterns so that it is easy and obvious for them to find their problems. In the following example, two basic intonation patterns, Rising/Falling Intonation and Rising Intonation, are presented. The topic is identifying people. The situation is that Lee and Lisa Fong are looking for their friend, Estelle, at the airport.

Lisa: Lee, look! Here come the people from the plane.
Is that Estelle with them?
Lee: Which one?
Lisa: The tall one.
Lee: The one with the suitcase?
Lisa: No. The one with the package.
Lee: Yes. That's Estelle.
Lisa: Hello, Estelle. How was your trip?
Estelle: Fine. It was a very good flight.
(*Lado*,1989, pp. 2-3)

Once students hear the two versions of the dialogue, they will immediately recognize the striking difference in intonation between their version and the native speakers'. Then the teacher should seek possible ways to solve their problems, such as misused intonation patterns. We suggest that the three intonation patterns be presented through various visual or aural effects. Some techniques include drawing pitch lines/curves or arrows, using musical scores, and using kazoos. Let's take a closer look at each of these techniques.

(1) Pitch lines/curves. One of the most commonly used ways to teach various intonation patterns is to draw pitch lines/curves. Besides drawing the pitch lines/curves, we suggest that the teacher blacken the last stressed syllable and put a dot over it. In doing so, students can be expected to produce the appropriate intonation with the correct word stress.

Lisa: How was your trip? (Rising/Falling Intonation)

(2) Arrows. Another simple way to teach intonation is to draw arrows over the place where pitch changes. It is a variation, in particular, for showing how pitch rises and falls within a sentence. The two examples are presented: a choice question as shown in A and a statement showing a series of items as in B.

A: Can we rent it or buy it? (Combination Intonation)

B: Our class meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

(3) Musical scores. The other effective visual effect is musical scores. In the following example, the pitch rises on "telle," which is the last stressed syllable. In order to be able to do that, students need to apply their knowledge of basic emphasis patterns as has been shown earlier in 3.1.2. That is, stress content words and not structure words.

Lisa: Is that Estelle with them? (Rising Intonation)

	4	
high	3	telle with them?
medium	2	Is that Es
low	1	

(4) Kazoos. In addition to the above visual effects, another vivid way to introduce intonation is with a toy kazoo. The sound of the kazoo is very similar to humming except that it is louder and clearer. By humming into it, the teacher can give a clever demonstration of the intonation of a sentence, which students may not be able to get through the above visual aids. Since kazoos are not available here, big-size straws are an excellent substitute. In the following example, three intonation patterns, Rising/Falling Intonation as shown in (a), Combination Intonation as in (b), and Rising Intonation as in (c), are presented. The teacher kazoos the melody of the sentence (a), (b), or (c), whereas students, working in pairs or groups, attend carefully to the melody and tell which sentence they hear. Note that the sentences in this activity should be of similar length so that the judgment of the difference of the three patterns has to rely on the melody they hear.

Examples: (a) Where are you going on Friday?
(b) Do you want some soup or salad?
(c) Would you like some Supersalad?

(5) Follow-ups. Often times when teaching Intonation Patterns, we found that many students seem to have more problems with Rising Intonation than with any other patterns. we have noticed that many of our students tend to ask Yes/No questions with Rising/Falling Pattern instead of Rising Intonation. Some may use Rising Pattern but tend to rise at the end of the sentence. We suspect it may have some relation with their mother tongue. Compare the following Yes/No questions:

English: Can you speak English?
Chinese: (a) 你會不會說英文?
(b) 你會說英文嗎?

The difference between English and Chinese is obvious when asking Yes/No questions. Whereas Americans use Rising Intonation, Chinese use Falling intonation or slightly rise at the question word "嗎", which is added at the end of the sentence. Apparently, for Chinese students, the Rising Pattern is a new habit that they need to learn how to perform. Whenever students have problems with Rising Intonation, practicing putting sentences on musical scores can be a useful way to help them out. Kazoos can be another option.

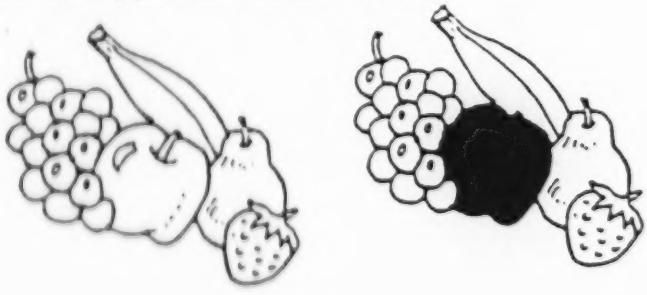
Musical scores and kazoos. Draw musical scores for the following sentences, and then practice saying or kazooing the sentences.

(a) Could you make a sandwich for me?
(b) Will you be interested in it?
(c) Would you like some Ice cream?

4.2 Sentence Focus & Emotions

Though our students have learned the basic emphasis patterns mentioned in part 3, they should know that these rules are not fixed. In fact, English speakers use emphasis on any word in a sentence to achieve various results, such as introducing new information, showing contrasts, correcting the previous information, or creating special attention or emphases, and so on. This special emphasis is called the sentence focus.

(1) Visual effects. One simple way to help students understand the importance of sentence focus is through visual effects. We can show students two different pictures. For instance, in the following pictures, what do you see?



An apple. Right. That's an easy way to make students become aware of the importance of focus. To help students overcome the problem with sentence focus, the teacher can easily draw from the textbook suitable situations in which two speakers exchange information by showing contrasts. There are a great number of topics, such as possessions, jobs, nationalities, shopping, asking directions, talking about vacation plans, and so on, all of which are excellent for showing contrasts. Just take "possessive" as an example:

A: This is your **book**.
B: No. That's **her** book. or
No. That's **hers**.

Notice that for speaker B, the stress shifts from "book" to "her," which indicates the emphasis of the response. If it is the general sentence, it should be : That's her **book**. The stress falls on "book" rather than "her."

Having the knowledge of why and how English speakers use focus, students should become familiar with the characteristics of focus, namely vowel lengthening, loudness, and emotions in various situations. Let's refer back to the previous conversation on the tape from *Lado*. Clearly, the two speakers do use focus to achieve certain results, such as drawing special attention as shown in (c), or providing new information to make corrections as in (e). Thus they keep the conversation going, and finally, they find the person they are looking for.

Lisa: Is that **Estelle** with them? (a)
Lee: Which **one**? (b)
Lisa: The **tall** one. (c)
Lee: The one with the **suitcase**? (d)
Lisa: No. The one with the **package**.(e)

(2) Mini dialogues. Another perfect topic to help students practice these characteristics is good news or bad news. In the following two situations, students can take turns practicing with a partner, playing with focus words "wonderful", "terrible", and "so," by dramatizing, lengthening and speaking louder. Encourage students to add personal emotions with given situations. Rubber bands can also be used here to get visual effects on vowel lengthening.

Examples: A: I finally got a new **car**.
B: That's <u>wonderful</u> news! I'm <u>so</u> glad to hear it.

A: I got fired from my **job**.
B: That's <u>terrible</u> news! I'm <u>so</u> sorry to hear it.

(3) Follow-ups. Sometimes we may want to challenge our students with tasks where they learn to become intelligent in using focus. For the following activity, student A says a general sentence, "Boston lost the game." Student B has to, first, look at the responding sentence, "Really? I thought New York lost the game," and then figure out the focus should be on the word "New York," and respond to student A appropriately.

Example: A: Boston lost the game.
B: Really? I thought New York lost the game.

Have students working in pairs or groups, and take turns practicing the conversation.

A: George plays baseball in Boston.
B: Really? I thought George played football in Boston.

A: The score was 8 to 44.
B: Really? I thought the score was 4 to 44.

A: George talked to David at the airport.
B: Really? I thought he talked to Paul at the airport.

A: It wasn't George's fault.
B: Really? I thought it was George's fault.
(Baker & Goldstein, 1990, p.35)

5. Conclusion

Pronunciation certainly deserves strong attention in the English class, especially in classes with a communicative approach. Poor pronunciation will cause problems in oral communication no matter how good a speaker's control of English grammar and vocabulary might be. Many of the problems, in fact, are caused by the influence of the speaker's mother tongue; Chinese students tend to use Chinese speech patterns or styles when speaking English. Therefore, English teachers need to help students be aware of this tendency in order to be able to speak English clearly and intelligently.

To overcome students' pronunciation problems, we offer a variety of kinesthetic, visual, and aural devices and activities for teaching English pronunciation. Although we do not have pronunciation class in our current English curriculum, it is hoped that these tools and techniques we have referred to will be a great help to English teachers as well as students.

Finally, we want to encourage Chinese EFL teachers to have more confidence in teaching English pronunciation even though we are not native speakers of English. With full advanced preparation, including practicing our own pronunciation and designing effective teaching activities, we can all be experts in teaching English pronunciation!

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